

Letters to the Editor

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Land Navigation Unnecessary?

[Editor's Note: We received a large volume of mail responding to SPC Pamela Hale's letter in the last issue concerning the need for land navigation in the military. Here are excerpts from some of the letters. Sorry, we couldn't print them all.]

The soldier's letter raised some questions, the chief among them: Was the soldier adequately prepared by her section sergeant/team leader/squad leader/platoon sergeant?? Did the unit first sergeant take an interest in ensuring that the soldier was ready to attend this important NCOES training?

Land navigation is an important and perishable skill to know and master. That may just be why it is a common task in STP 21-1-SMCT. Indeed, here in the New England area, there are reports of hikers becoming lost because the batteries failed in their GPS (Global Positioning System), and either they did not have a map/compass to fall back on, or, if they did have them, were unable to use them properly. Just because the soldier did not need land navigation in the Gulf does not mean that it won't be needed in the future.

What is more important, however, is that the soldier is exhibiting what may be called the "Burger King" syndrome, in that she wants to "have it her way." I don't know what institution of higher learning the soldier is currently attending, but at the university I graduated

from, if a student failed a portion of the class, then he/she failed the entire class and had to retake it. PLDC is pass/fail at its basest level.

In this era of dwindling resources in dollars for limited school seats, it's unfortunate that the soldier failed, did not have the ambition to learn from the mistakes made, and motivation to continue, with the hope of attending PLDC again. Ultimately, the soldier alone must accept personal responsibility for the failure.

*SFC (Ret) Frederick W. Eldridge III
Plymouth, MA*



Usually I would not respond to such a letter, but at this time I feel I must. My comment to you SPC Hale and any other personnel who have that same viewpoint whether you are Reserve, National Guard or Active duty ... the standard is the standard. Why should things be changed because as a Reservist you do not have time to learn. Pull out a manual, take 15 minutes and learn. It's not that difficult.

You said, "Thank you Sergeants Major who already have their stripes," and that they did not have to go through that. Let me tell you something ... those sergeants major went through a heck of a lot more training than you can ever imagine. And they did not get there without training other soldiers. Obviously they were

outstanding leaders or they would not have made it that far. With your letter you have shown some of the problems with the military ... they have obviously lowered too many standards if you made it this far with that attitude.

If 98 percent of the soldiers attending PLDC have passed, why should they change it because you are unable to accept responsibility for your own actions? I have been in the military for five years, and I do not use land navigation every day; however, I made it through PLDC, Jumpmaster and Pathfinder ... not by whining about the standard but by taking out a manual and spending time learning. You also stated you did not need land navigation in Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Why is that? Because someone above you had already done it for you.

My final point is to be a leader you must be able to teach and guide soldiers. If you cannot train to maintain, then you can not effectively lead.

*SGT Patricia Burdette
Ft. Benning, GA*



Shame on you, SPC Hale. The standards set forth for future NCOs are worldwide. Both Active and Reserve. Your failing to pass land navigation does not mean the Army's backbone is broken. It simply means you lack needed training.

The standards were made very clear on what you needed to do in order to graduate PLDC. How do I know this? Because I told you myself. The reason soldiers need to know land navigation serves many purposes. Take into consideration your supply unit needing to drop off medical supplies. Your leadership is taken out, and, oh yeah, you didn't think you would ever use land navigation. Now the people who need the supplies will probably not get them, and God only knows what will happen if you cannot find the correct path back to friendly lines.

Now look at the civilian side of it. Would you allow someone to drive you around LA who could not navigate? I feel you're already lost in what a good

NCO should BE-KNOW-DO. Perhaps the Army is losing good soldiers, but it's not because of NCO academies or land navigation requirements. It's because commanders and section leaders fail to provide this much needed training. Perhaps your letter should have been addressed to your command.

*SSG Brinda D. Cline
USAR NCO Academy
Ft. Lewis, WA*



The letter from SPC Hale concerns me. It would appear this soldier has not received any leadership in her 9 1/2 years of service in the Army Reserve. If so, she would understand that the Reserve is part of the Total Army just like the Active component and the National Guard. Each component is an important part of the force projection Army of today. I'm quite sure that Reserve and National Guard soldiers would like to feel as equals to the Active duty soldiers. This cannot happen if there are different or lower standards for the Reserve. Personally, I would like to know that the soldier backing me up has received the same training and held to the same standard, regardless of the component.

With the increased number of deployments to countries with underdeveloped infrastructures, land navigation skills will become more and more important. You will not always travel on a main supply route through a desert where you can see for miles and may not need to use your map. If your MSR was in wooded area and blocked, could you find another route, or would you give up and return to the supply point? A GPS is not always the answer either. Are you going to use up 50 gallons of fuel trying to find the right grid? What happens if the batteries go dead? Being able to read a map, use terrain association, and navigate with a compass is skill level 1.

I believe soldiers who desire to become NCOs should possess the traits and knowledge of an NCO prior to becoming one. This requires the potential NCO to master the skills up to and including the level they desire to reach. Soldiers look to

their leaders for leadership in all environments, not just in garrison. A motivated soldier who truly desires to become an NCO will take the initiative to master skills in which they are deficient. Being in Los Angeles is not an excuse for being unable to practice land navigation. You must have someone in your Reserve organization who can help. I'm sure there are 1:50,000 maps of the San Gabriel Mountains, Santa Ana Mountains or the Santa Monica Mountains. My point is that someone with initiative would find a place to practice in his/her local area and someone to help if he/she really wanted to improve land navigation skills. This is the type of NCO I want to work with ... not someone who believes the Army should lower the standards if they are hard to overcome.

By the way, when I went to PNCOC (PLDC equivalent) in 1978, land navigation was a graduation requirement.

*MSG David B. Myers
USASMA*



Becoming an NCO is more than just taking tests on leadership and getting first-time gos on tests and in classes. These classes and tests show you a basic layout of what an NCO is but only through practice and time can you fully understand what it is to be an NCO.

As an NCO, you have two basic responsibilities: accomplishment of the mission and the welfare of your soldiers. You were given a mission — find these points in this amount of time — a mission you did not accomplish. PLDC offers a soldier multiple chances of passing. Along with the many hours of classes of map reading and using a compass, there should have been more than enough time to learn how to go from one point to another.

You may never use land navigation during your career, but as an NCO you will be required to teach your soldiers the basic skills, of which land navigation is one. Yes, you may have been a "good" soldier but your skills and professionalism were not enough to make you a "good" NCO. And because you quit

they never will be enough.

*SGT Jason J. Heller
Ft. Knox, KY*



The specialist is evidently a product of her leadership environment if she feels land navigation is an "extra thing" to be accomplished. As a small group leader for PLDC for the past five years, I have stood witness to the attitude that land nav is an "extra thing" in most units. No one wants to send an obviously bright individual home, least of all a SGL.

The ability to navigate from point to point is essential to an NCO's development, not because you may have to use the map and compass to get from "one tree to another," (that's a very small part of land navigation) but because of the other tenants that land navigation teaches you — planning and the ability to execute that plan; it improves the ability to act on limited written instructions; it develops the ability to keep your composure in times of high stress; it develops the ability to devise a plan in the face of adverse conditions and overcome obstacles, both physical and mental ... the list goes on and on.

The specialist may have made superior scores on every written examination, and she asks why she must repeat the entire course. SPC Hale, you have failed one of the most important lessons any NCO or soldier can learn — taking and accepting responsibility for your actions and learning from previous failures.

SPC Hale contends that the standard for Reserve soldiers should be changed, allowing them to graduate PLDC without the land navigation requirement. She also states that she made honor graduate of her class, having received first time gos on everything concerning leadership. She then says it is a slap in the face to have failed and have to repeat the entire course instead of just the land navigation portion, which she failed, going as far to claim that when you ... "fail a class at school, do you repeat the entire semester?" I'm not sure where she went to school, but where I went, if you failed a class, you repeated that again.

Right now, your ego is bruised and your self-confidence is shaken. Learn from it!! Return to conquer the course or wallow in self-pity. The choice is yours.

SSG Chris Mitchell
U.S. Army NCO Academy
Ft. Chaffee, AR



SPC Hale seems to blame her inability to successfully complete the land navigation course to her living in a large metropolitan area and lack of time. I have had many soldiers I have sent to PLDC who were from large metropolitan areas. They too were baffled by land navigation, and we in the regular Army are just as pressed for time as your counterparts in the reserve components. I have personally spent time on weekends and after duty time to ensure their success through training. I have not yet had a soldier fail PLDC because they *couldn't navigate from "one tree to another,"* as SPC Hale points out.

She also said that during Desert Storm she was never once given a map or a grid coordinate and stated ... "it [land navigation] is not a necessity in today's Army." There are several possible reasons for this. Perhaps her NCO had the map and grid coordinates. Although it is inexcusable to send a soldier on a mission without letting them have the necessary tools to accomplish their mission, I must ask this ... Why did SPC Hale not ask for a map and grid coordinate? Did SPC Hale travel from Los Angeles to Ft. Lewis without these tools? Just how do we get from one place to another if land navigation is not, as SPC Hale points out, a necessity?

SPC Hale then asks, "Is it just me or does anyone else feel the standards regarding land navigation for Reserve soldiers in PLDC need to be changed? Who says because it's the Army, the rules can't be changed?" I can only reply that I personally feel the requirement to complete land navigation is not only useful, but a necessity. Having served in positions from team leader to platoon sergeant, I want to know that the soldiers leading our most valuable resource are going to

be capable of getting the soldiers to the mission and not getting lost. In my current assignment, we couldn't be effective if we couldn't navigate. I am not saying the rules can't be changed, only that it is imperative that they NOT be changed.

In summary, SPC Hale said she would ... "bet my military career that I'll never need [land navigation]." It may seem ruthless to say this, but that is a bet I think she would have lost had she not chosen to leave the Reserves.

SSG Allen L. Fogleson
Ft. Polk, LA



Any soldier, private to sergeant major, is required to know land navigation skills. As a future NCO, she should have been more proactive in determining her weaknesses instead of whining and pointing fingers at others. Instead of blaming the Army for your downfall, step back and look at yourself. A good NCO would.

SSG Randy Collins
Ft. Bragg, NC



The initial steps of soldier development begin with recognizing and identifying our strengths and weaknesses. This soldier should have realized her shortcomings and taken the appropriate course of action to improve. Within the team environment stressed during PLDC, soldiers are taught to make use of all available resources. With this soldier knowing that she had not yet attained the expected proficiency, I find it difficult to fathom that no classmate or instructor was available to help with peer group or instructor-led remedial training.

The Army is not in the business of tearing down egos and losing good soldiers. The Army is charged with developing confident, well trained, technically and tactically proficient soldiers to support and defend our constitution.

SGT William L. Gaines III
Ft. Sam Houston, TX



The words "I am a good soldier" and "I quit" do not belong in the same article. Good soldiers never quit. No one likes to fail, but a good soldier accepts failure, learns from it and drives on with the mission. A substandard soldier is beaten by failure and blames others for this failure. We do not want or need this kind of soldier in the armed forces.

SSG Gary D. Shaver
Lakeland, FL



I was surprised to see the response by this young soldier for her failure of PLDC. I'm not impressed by this whiney approach she has taken to blame her failure on the standards prescribed by PLDC, standards that thousands of young NCOs have been challenged with and passed because they were ready to meet and accept the challenge of wanting to be a "leader."

And shame on whatever so-called "leader" who sent this soldier to PLDC without properly preparing her. Some NCOs have forgotten where they came from and have forgotten to mentor and teach young soldiers to be tomorrow's leaders. It's NCOs like this who give the rest of the corps a bad name. I challenge those of you who don't take the time to take care of your soldiers to find a copy of the NCO Creed and read it. Read it well and make sure you understand what it's telling you to do.

The answer to SPC Hale's failure of PLDC shouldn't be to lower the standards to allow those with no insight on that particular leadership obstacle to pass, regardless of what component they are with. The right answer is for leaders to train their soldiers in tasks that the military has been teaching soldiers every day, such as land navigation. Being a leader isn't a 9 to 5 job. Let's start getting back to the basics and lead from the front.

SPC Norman A. Farnsworth
Ft. Campbell, KY



The assumption of NCO rank carries with it the duty to teach others. Could you truthfully say that at no time in your career could a subordinate have sought your guidance on this — or any other — common task?

The Army is made up of soldiers whose mission is to defend the United States against enemies foreign and domestic. All other duties support this mission; therefore, it is incumbent on all of us to be trained to perform that mission in all its facets. If the standards required in execution of this mission seem unnecessary to you, Specialist, I wish you well.

SSG A. L. Parrott
Lacy, WA



No, the standards regarding land navigation for Reserve soldiers attending PLDC should not be changed. Rather, soldiers should be prepared prior to attending any NCOES course. Look at the big picture. The majority of soldiers attending PLDC are able to pass all aspects of the course. The course isn't supposed to be easy. It is intended to mold future NCOs and weed out those who don't measure up. Stop your whining and decide whether you want to be a quitter or an NCO.

I have one question. Why is that a soldier never questions the content of a course curriculum until they fail to meet the standard?

SGT Carl Slovinski
El Paso, TX



Not only did we (who already have our stripes) have to take this course of instruction, we also had to use it almost every day during the Vietnam conflict. Not only did the Active duty units go to Vietnam, but there were 42 Reserve units activated, 35 of which deployed to Vietnam. Nine of these units were medical units. There were also 20 National Guard units activated during the conflict

— eight deployed to Vietnam and one of those was a medical unit.

Without knowing [land navigation], many soldiers sent out on patrols may not have made it back to the safety (?) of their base camps. It is a vital part of the training in the Army and ensured not only the NCOs made it back, but the soldiers under their supervision as well.

Ms. Hale, with your attitude, it's clear why you have 9 1/2 years in the Army and only made it to specialist and why you are now "100 percent" civilian. It is also evident you have been a civilian and not a soldier for the past 9 1/2 years.

SGM William E. Taylor
Ft. Huachuca, AZ



The effective range of an excuse is zero meters. Her view is a perfect example of how the Army standards are deteriorating by lowering the standards to meet the soldier instead of raising the soldier to meet the standards. Her excuses for failure are pathetic.

In my opinion, the backbone of the Army may be strained, but not broken. I believe in this instance the system worked and the backbone gets much stronger every time it does not let a sub-standard soldier enter the NCO ranks.

SSG Justin M. Finney
Ft. Benning, GA



Why hasn't her unit taught her this? The fear I have is that this is not the only case. I sincerely hope her immediate supervisor and first sergeant were reprimanded. The problem she had will not go away but it can be fixed with training. Too many units let their soldiers down by not training on soldier skills. When our soldiers fail, we fail. NCOs are the primary trainers of soldiers and must train the soldiers under their care. Never give in to whiners who can't meet the standards, but train them to exceed the standards.

SFC Dale A. Lee
Johnstown, PA



I'm sure you are a very good soldier, after nine years of service, and your intentions are pure. Unfortunately, by judging from the attitudes and values expressed in your letter, you are not ready to be a leader. After all, how can you lead from the front when you don't know where you are going?

SSG David R. Williams
Ft. Lewis, WA



It seems so hard to believe that a soldier with nearly 10 years of service is so willing to toss it all away because of a simple land navigation course. Was the soldier not given a retest? Normally when someone receives a first time no-go, they have some remedial training and then re-take the test. I have earned my stripes and I can assure you I had land navigation in PLDC at Ft. Knox, KY, and at BNCOC at Ft. Bliss, TX. As for the sarcasm directed at the sergeants major and the entire NCO Corps ... it seems so easy to direct the blame in one direction, but I assure you that if she would shoot a back azimuth, she'll find where the real blame lies.

SSG Carl A. Duch
McConnelsville, OH



On behalf of every senior NCO in the Reserve components, I apologize to you for setting you up for this failure. You should have been exposed to proper use of land navigation skills throughout your years of service. We should have assessed your inability to perform those tasks to standard and assigned someone to get you up to speed before we sent you off to school.

As far as your comments go about our current sergeants major not having to do this? Check your facts. Land navigation has been a required skill since I took it up in basic training. It still is. If you were my troop I'd have you in the woods myself showing you what we all need to know to

be effective soldiers. Your situation highlights concerns that we all have about why we lose soldiers. My only hope is that your COSCOM CSM reads your letter and has already interceded to correct a definite wrong. Current failures represent future challenges. Seek help with your shortcomings and try again. If you can't get the help you need in your unit, look elsewhere. We all need good soldiers.

And thanks to SGM Clifford for saying what should have been said some time ago. I'm not sure why our editor sees the need to put these negative letters in this publication, but it's becoming ridiculous.

CSM A. Kemp Freund
Army National Guard, Maryland

[Editor's Note: If the "Letters To The Editor" section were restricted only to those comments considered positive, what would be the point? This magazine is published to further NCO professional development, to express opinions, and to generate communication within the NCO Corps. By reading about the problems other soldiers have, NCOs may be encouraged to take a closer look at their own units to see if the same problems exist and then correct them.]

National Guard Injustices

The great accomplishments of Active Army soldiers around the globe are admirable. I can't help but feel a great amount of jealousy when I read the stories about the numerous soldiers performing outstandingly. My favorite articles are [in the Notable NCO section] of *The NCO Journal*.

I started to wonder why not me? I would like for someone to read about me. I have the endurance to go the distance, the ambition and the determination it takes to become a distinguished soldier. So, what's my problem? Well, I believe it is my branch of service: The Army National Guard. All I ever received were negative responses whenever I strive to be all I want to become. For example, two years ago I was assigned to

a unit in Texas. I was in top physical shape. I received a score of 297 when I took the Army APFT. I had also recently completed BNCOC. I asked my supervisor if it was feasible for me to attend Airborne School. Do you know what the answer was? You guessed it. "NO." And do you know why? My supervisor explained that in order for me to attend jump school, I had to be assigned to an airborne unit and furthermore, the National Guard does not allocate funding for this training simply because I want to attend.

I wanted to be a drill sergeant. A year ago, I asked my supervisor (while stationed in the Florida National Guard) if it was possible for me to attend Drill Sergeant School. Do you know what the answer was? It was "NO." The National Guard does not need drill sergeants. In addition, I wanted to attend the Master Fitness Course anywhere it was offered, but guess what the answer was? Again, it was "NO." The Active Guardsman can only meet all the minimum standards for promotion and may compete for a few select programs and probably work to retire, but that is all.

I welcome the opportunity to excel as a traditional soldier. I believe that as an Active Guardsman, any soldier (like myself) desiring to achieve personal goals and challenges in the military, in order to be an all-around soldier, must be permitted to exercise the same privileges the regular Army soldiers benefit from.

Finally, I am a remarkable volleyball player. I would like to try out for the all Army Volleyball Team, but guess what the answer might be? You guessed it. "NO."

SSG Donna E. Edwards
Florida National Guard

Coed Basic Training And AIT

In the wake of the scandals at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, there have been discussions as high as the U.S. Congress if coed Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training should continue. In my opinion, the answer is absolutely yes.

If we train as we fight, then we must acknowledge that female soldiers will be working along side male soldiers in the

battlefield of the present. Therefore, male and female soldiers must learn to work together from day one. Likewise, soldiers must be taught to respect the dignity of their fellow soldiers from day one.

All soldiers must understand that women are in the military to stay, and that their roles are going to increase, rather than decrease. Even if a soldier is in combat arms, that soldier will have to deal with females in the combat support and combat service support units that are in brigades and divisions.

This is reality. It is here today. We must accept it.

SSG John S. Penman
Ft. Riley, KS

Drill Sergeant Issue

The NCO Journal, Winter '96-97, focused on the drill sergeant from several perspectives. This issue was timely and did not appear to be a bandage for a sore that was bound to surface. Credit is given to all those proud soldiers who elaborated on the significance the drill sergeants have had on building good soldiers and leaders.

Drill sergeants are like parents who search to do the right things, especially that of raising a model citizen. And at times, parents fail. They fail to set good examples. But time has shown us that we can overcome adversity. The key is to forge on, but not to ignore what has happened. Learn from this bomb shell.

Sexual harassment is a bad vehicle moving with personal behaviors at times not in check. Soldiers are human and capable of making mistakes. When a vehicle goes unchecked, it can malfunction. The problem(s) must be determined before it can be fixed. The Armed Forces is capable of investigating and finding what caused its vehicle to malfunction. Then it will be fixed. The sore will heal and leaders will continue to mold the young folks who depend so deeply on leaders to lead them.

The anecdotes written throughout this *Journal* suggest *esprit-de-corps* is still very much alive in today's Army. If you're not sure, read the Winter '96-97 issue of *The NCO Journal*. I'm proud

to be an American soldier. Airborne!

ISG Kenneth Harvey
Ft. Bragg, NC

Breaking the Code of Silence

What's going on in today's Army? The Aberdeen scandal, improprieties in the Recruiting Command, sexual harassment within the ranks, marital infidelity by senior leaders, ostrization of whistleblowers ... the list goes on and on. It seems like every day we are in the damage control mode more and more. Have we lost the ability to do the right thing? Why aren't these things being nipped in the bud before they get out of hand, or better yet, before they occur in the first place? Are we so fearful that somehow we might be wrongly implicated in the infraction that we have lost the courage to tell the truth?

What is the definition of courage? Some say it's the ability to overcome fear. Some say it's the ability to control fear. But what is it really? The overall definition is probably clear as day to those who have had to apply it at the risk of life or limb. But how do you define it in today's Army? To understand the issue, you have to look at the demographics of the organization we belong to in its current form. In today's Army, where a single flaw can signal the closure of one's career, the perception of perfection is the overriding factor in the minds of many aspiring soldiers. They believe this because this is what they see and this is what they hear. It's being ingrained so deeply into the thought process of our junior leaders, that it is being accepted as a matter of course, just the way we do business. This is wrong. And it's our fault as the mentors of our Army's future leaders.

As all leaders know, subordinates emulate the actions of their superiors. They emulate the good as well as the bad. Today's soldiers are much more intelligent than the troopers of the past. They can't be fooled by the false proclamation or perception of being perfect. I haven't met a perfect soldier or been a member of unit that was perfect during my 18 years of service. They don't exist. But you would never know this by the verbal and written responses we hear given to supe-

riors by so many leaders today. What is the big deal about telling the truth? Honesty and integrity are the time honored foundations of what we stand for as leaders. When we tell the truth, no matter how difficult (or embarrassing) it may be, we find out what's broken and can initiate the problem solving process to get it fixed. Honesty is a good thing and we ought to bear our swords by it. How can we do less? We shouldn't, but we do.

Good examples are unit status reports and personnel evaluations. It's important we be as honest and truthful as possible in these critical areas. When we put a "spin" on the numbers for the upcoming QTB or overinflate an evaluation report, we violate our integrity and lower ourselves into the ranks of liars. How can you trust anyone prone to such flaws in judgment? It's tough but many have chosen this route in the never-ending, insatiable quest for promotion. When we provide our superiors with false information, we set them and ourselves up for failure. Leaders cannot make safe, sound, and timely decisions without accurate data. If we don't paint a clear picture, we get a questionable decision in return. How can it not be??

The problem may be systematic. Look at the personnel management system we have created in response to drawdown and fiscal reductions. One bad piece of paper in a soldier's file destroys a career, regardless of how old it is. The way we evaluate assignment patterns are another contributing factor to the mess. Enlisted soldiers have little or no control over their assignments. Not everyone gets to be a squad leader, section sergeant or platoon sergeant. There just aren't enough slots. Performance has lost out to ticket punching. The emphasis on badges, tabs and awards is misguided as well. Whatever happened to the old adage that it's not the uniform that makes the soldier, it's the person inside that uniform who makes all the difference. These things all add up to this "zero defect" disease that is tearing us apart from the inside out. By virtue of the system we have created, we have fostered a code of silence. When people in positions of authority condone something, in effect

they sanction it. This is wrong and we know it.

A trait we have to get back is the ability to ask the hard question and give the hard answer. Some never lost it, but many have lost it in a big way. Just because your question or answer may not be what your boss wants to hear, doesn't make it wrong. Put your career aside to do the right thing. When you get up in the morning and look into the mirror, there is only one face you have to look at. That face is yours. The decisions we make or fail to make have to be lived with the rest of our lives. This is a heavy burden to bear, but a small price to pay for the pursuit of honesty, integrity and the enhancement of your credibility as a leader.

I don't know how many times I have heard a leader tell me, "The boss gives me no authority to make decisions. He just won't listen to me." This is hogwash. If you transmit your message in a professional, tactful manner, how can he not? You just have to have the courage to step up to the plate, spread your feet a shoulder's width apart and break the code of silence by asking that hard question, or giving that hard answer. Will there be repercussions? Maybe. And maybe not. But the bottom line is this ... things won't get better until we make them better. Only we can make a difference. So what are we waiting for?

SFC Greg Griffin
USAEUR, 7th Army

Another Perspective On Drill Sergeants

First of all, I wish to commend your fine journal for doing an outstanding job in dedicating its Winter issue to the drill sergeant. I did three years on the trail from 1986 to 1989 at Ft. Knox, KY, training 19D Cavalry Scout soldiers. The experience I gained was awesome and rewarding to say the least. It is with great pride that I have to admit your article brought back a lot of good memories.

It is very unfortunate to see that there was a "select few" who made it through Drill Sergeant School who never should have been given the opportunity to attend. I have no mercy or pity whatsoever

for those NCOs who violated that special trust given to them the day they graduated from Drill Sergeant School. These NCOs should be punished if the charges are proven true, and the punishment seen as a wake-up call to others who might decide to dishonor our "hard-earned" badge.

Last year I tried to volunteer for another tour as a drill sergeant but my request was disapproved. For some reason, DA is not permitting former drill sergeants to apply. In times such as these where the Army is trying to save training dollars, it makes sense to permit motivated former drill sergeants to do another tour if they wished to do so. A two-week "refresher" course is all that would be required compared to the mandatory nine-week program that all other candidates must go through. As a senior NCO with 15 years in the Army and who has attended some other very good career enhancing schools, I feel I can still contribute in the development of new soldiers or even drill sergeant candidates if given the opportunity.

SFC Victor M. Roman
Schweinfurt, Germany

Taking Care Of Business

Take care of soldiers and they will take care of the mission. This is a fundamental aspect of leadership, for the soldier is the greatest asset of any leader. And what that leader provides for the soldiers is reflected in their team. Therefore, to me, leadership is a process of giving.

This process starts with the simplest of concepts — taking care of soldiers. As a leader, I will see to their basic needs such as food, shelter, supplies and pay — those things necessary to welfare and morale. But I must give my immediate action to their extraordinary needs and emergencies, so that worries are alleviated and attention is directed to the mission at hand. By promptly providing the necessities, the soldiers will see my genuine concern and care. Thus we begin to build a mutual exchange of trust and respect, which is vital to communication and vital to any relationship, especially that of a soldier and his/her leader.

In being a leader, I am also a teacher

and a guide. I must be an example. I am and I give the best I can, and in return I expect no less. I am honest and admit my mistakes, and I use that as a teaching tool. Teaching is a two-way street. Not only am I constantly teaching and training, but I am also learning and listening. In doing this, I am getting to know my soldiers.

By knowing my soldiers I learn our capabilities as a squad or unit. I find weaknesses, and provide direction and motivation to overcome them. But I also find strengths and build on those strengths together as a team. Meanwhile, I am training junior leaders, encouraging self-direction and self-motivation. For at any time and in any situation, any one of my soldiers must be able to take my place. A leader cannot be indispensable. Therefore, I am leaving a legacy for the future, while fulfilling the traditions of my past, instilled within me by my leaders.

Through the building of trust and respect, we have laid a foundation of purpose and that is the most important thing a leader can give. We have built a vehicle together and purpose is the force that drives it. I must instill pride and show them my pride, encourage confidence and guide them the way finding inner strength. My soldiers will know, just as I know about myself, that they in themselves are already leaders.

My greatest reward is the knowledge that a soldier gives willingly to me and the mission. I will lead and follow, with the knowledge that some day we may risk our lives together — freely and without doubt. This is what leadership means to me. After all, leaders are not defined by who or what they are, but by who and what their soldiers are.

SPC Johnathan Dempsey
Schofield Barracks, HI

Change NCO Rating System

A change is greatly needed in the way our NCOs are currently being rated. I do agree that the current evaluation system is inflated; however, there's two sides to that coin. No one ever brings to light all those junior and senior NCOs whose careers are being ruined by unqualified

civilian raters.

More often than I care to see, seasoned professional and hardworking NCOs have their careers in the hands of a civilian with no managerial experience or military knowledge. It seems as if no one really takes into consideration that PLDC, BNCOC, ANCOC, First Sergeants Course and the Sergeants Major Academy are a great way for U.S. Army junior and senior soldiers to learn valuable leadership and managerial skills and someone should require that all our DOD civilians get equivalent training.

Sometimes, even our senior leaders, enlisted and commissioned alike, will place civilians in charge when it is clear that all the managerial skills and technical leadership are with the NCO. If a civilian is placed in charge of any soldier, he/she should be required to at least learn basic customs and courtesy of the armed forces. Some civilian supervisors aren't even aware of the military rank structure or NCO responsibilities, i.e. training, caring and team building. So why are they allowed to rate NCOs? If this oversight continues, ratings will continue to be inflated or some NCOs won't get a fair rating when one is deserved. Only commissioned and noncommissioned officers should rate NCOs.

SSG Keith D. Baskerville

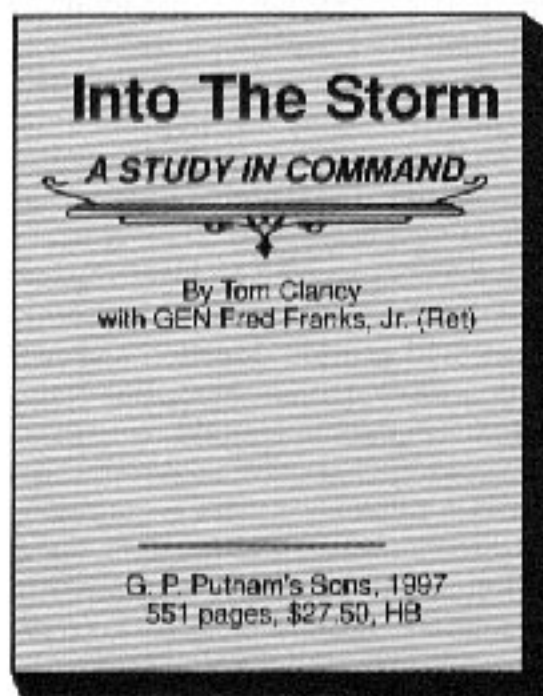
Standards ... What Happened?

What happened to the true hard-core standards that made soldiers soldiers? It's not the Army standards that we go by now. It has become a standard as each leader sees it in his/her perspective. It seems that some of our leaders have taken the Army standard and adapted it to how they see the standard should be or maybe they just put up blinders and don't care.

Whether it has to do with individual soldier training, physical fitness or military appearance, leaders have become too relaxed when it comes to standards. Since when do we as leaders accept a lower standard as a substitute for what the Army intended or instilled on us to follow, uphold and lead by? Standards have nothing to do with race, religion or

This book is a history of how VII Corps fought in Operation Desert Storm. It's also the personal story of GEN Fred Franks, Jr. and how he overcame the amputation of one of his legs, to continue in a successful Army career and of the reforms that took place in the U.S. Army during the 1970s and 1980s. Clancy's ability as a writer keeps the volume from sounding like a dry textbook and makes it a good account of military operations.

Franks basically tells his side of the story. He discusses how he received his warning order to deploy VII Corps, the challenges he faced and how VII Corps succeeded. Franks also gives his side of the story of the dispute he had with GEN H. Norman Schwarzkopf with the ap-



parent slowness of VII Corps during the ground war. Franks maintains the delay was caused because of the amount of time it took for the remainder of VII Corps to move through the breach after the 1st Infantry Division broke through the Iraqi berm. The book contains many diagrams. One of them is of the breach on day one of the ground war. The breach looked like a classic bottleneck on a major highway and to get his units through safely and into the assault formations, simply took time. He also cites faults in the outdated radio equipment that he used to command his corps. Once the breach was broken and the divisions properly formed, the attack went according to plan, except much faster. Franks is generous in his praise for the commanders and soldiers for the work they did in Operation Desert Storm.

This book should be read after reading Schwarzkopf's autobiography, "It Doesn't Take A Hero." Schwarzkopf is critical of Franks' performance and this is Franks' opportunity to respond. The two books also display the two different leadership styles of the two officers. The challenges of running Corps Level and Theater Level Tactical Operations Centers are displayed. There are many accounts of information overload and lack of information and how this affected the decision-making process.

This book should be read by all Operation Desert Storm veterans so they can appreciate the magnitude of their actions. It should also be read by all NCOs. We have all, at one time or another, cursed higher headquarters for their decisions. This book gives insight as to how decisions are made at the corps level and the problems of communicating these decisions down the chain of command. I believe certain chapters of the book should be prior reading for the Battle Staff NCO course. It would impress upon the students the importance of the information they will be handling.

SSG John S. Penman
Ft. Riley, KS

Letters to the Editor

beliefs. The Army is an institution with standards for all to obey, train by, work by and survive by.

When I came in the military in the late 1960s, the standard was instilled in you and you didn't forget it. You lived by it, worked by it and fought by it. Your survival and whether or not you made it in the military depended on how you adapted to the standards. There were no short cuts nor were standards compromised. If you couldn't cut the mustard [standards], you were out. Soldiers and leaders accepted them as they were. We didn't question the standards or our leaders. We had the utmost respect for our superiors. We dared not question their word.

Soldiers now question superiors and compromise Army standards whenever possible. They seem to think they have the right to do this. And that is our fault, for we as senior leaders and the Army as a whole have given them [soldiers] too much freedom to express their rights. Soldiers now have too many rights, while senior leaders seem to have less. It used to be that soldiers obeyed orders when they were given. Now soldiers ask why.

Throughout my career of almost 30 years, I have seen the Army change in a

way that is not what it used to be. Maybe I am an old salty dog whose time has come to an end. But the way I see it, a standard is a standard and it should be followed through as it was intended to be. Standards will always exist even after I am gone, but those following in my footsteps must take a hard look at themselves and the soldiers they are leading and ask themselves, "Will I set the standard as it was meant to be and stand by it, or will I compromise the standard to fit in with the new wave of the 1990s?"

SGM David J. Budzinski
USASMA, Ft. Bliss, TX

Oops! Our Mistake

Reference: The NCO Journal (Spring 97), the article "Strategies for Sergeant and Staff Sergeant Promotion," incorrectly cited AR 672-5-1, Awards and Decorations. This regulation was superseded by AR 600-8-22, Military Awards, dated 25 February 1996. Thanks to MSG L. Mathlin, USASOC, Ft. Bragg, NC, Editor.